

Collegeville, PA — Congressman Sestak today joined with Congressmen Gerlach and Dent; state Senators Rafferty and Dinniman; state Representative Mike Vereb; and a host of county and municipal leaders this morning to hold a call with the EPA to discuss solutions to the trichloroethylene (TCE) situation in the district.

Alarmed with recent reports on the level of trichloroethylene (TCE) in the environment in areas of the 7th District, Congressman Joe Sestak called on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to immediately review and rectify its regulations on TCE emissions.

TCE is a chemical used to degrease metal products by two manufacturers located in Lower Providence and Trappe. Exposure to TCE has been linked to several forms of cancer and scientists are concerned with the levels of the chemical detected in the two communities.

Both companies that use TCE currently emit within the EPA limits. However, the close proximity of two companies has raised TCE in the air to a toxic level. The Pennsylvania Department of Public health stated that the lifetime cancer risk driven by high TCE concentrations “was significantly higher at the Collegeville sites than other monitoring sites in Pennsylvania.”

“I have made health one of my top priorities and my immediate concern is the effect these emissions are having on my constituents’ health,” said Congressman Sestak. “The EPA simply must revise these standards immediately for the health and welfare of the community.”

Following is text of the letter submitted to the EPA immediately following the meeting this morning, outlining Congressman’s Sestak’s demand for change.

May 18, 2007

Mr. Stephen Johnson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Room 2436 ARN
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

I am writing to follow up on today's conference call that took place May 18 with Congressman Jim Gerlach, Congressman Charlie Dent, state and local elected officials, along with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Conservation (DEP).

I want to reemphasize how troubled I am about the EPA's recent decision not to take action on trichloroethylene (TCE) air emissions in my Congressional District in Pennsylvania, and I am writing to have the EPA change its approach in the regulation of this toxic pollutant and revisit the exemption it gave to the narrow tube manufacturers.

Elevated TCE levels have been discovered in the Borough of Collegeville, Borough of Trappe, Lower Providence Township, and Upper Providence Township. Some scientists feel this will create serious health risks to residents of these areas. As described by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), TCE is:

used mainly as a solvent to remove grease from metal parts, but it is also an ingredient in adhesives, paint removers, typewriter correction fluids, and spot removers. TCE is not thought

to occur naturally in the environment. However, it has been found in underground water sources and many surface waters as a result of the manufacture, use, and disposal of the chemical. Breathing small amounts may cause headaches, lung irritation, dizziness, poor coordination, and difficulty concentrating. Breathing large amounts of trichloroethylene may cause impaired heart function, unconsciousness, and death. Breathing it for long periods may cause nerve, kidney, and liver damage. Drinking large amounts of trichloroethylene may cause nausea, liver damage, unconsciousness, impaired heart function, or death. Drinking small amounts of trichloroethylene for long periods may cause liver and kidney damage, impaired immune system function, and impaired fetal development in pregnant women, although the extent of some of these effects is not yet clear. Skin contact with trichloroethylene for short periods may cause skin rashes.

Superior Tube Company, located in my district, and Accellent, located just outside of my district, are two of the largest TCE emitters in the nation. A year of testing by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has found TCE levels in the area to be significantly higher than in other areas of the state.

While Superior Tube and Accellent, both narrow-tube producers, are currently adhering to current EPA regulations, because of their close proximity to one another, the pollution of the two companies is at a toxic level. The newly released EPA standards entitled: National Air Emission Standards for Hazardous Pollutants: Halogenated Solvent Cleaning, were created with the intent of regulating the pollution of one company. Given that the two companies are within four miles of each other creates one large, highly toxic, environment for the unsuspecting people that live in the proximity area. This creates a set of special circumstances that, I do not believe, was taken into consideration while crafting these new regulations.

Furthermore, even if Superior Tube and Accellent's close proximity had been taken into consideration, section III A 3 of the National Air Emission Standards for Hazardous Pollutants: Halogenated Solvent Cleaning, exempts narrow-tube companies from having to adhere to these new more strict regulations. Had the state, local, and federal officials, as well as the community at-large, been more involved in the final determination to exempt these businesses, it would have been clear that these new regulations were unacceptable.

I urge the EPA to revisit the National Air Emission Standards for Hazardous Pollutants: Halogenated Solvent Cleaning and amend these regulations. There are precedents for the EPA to revisiting past decisions. On July 29, 2005 the EPA announced their reconsideration of some portions of the final rule made on National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants; General Provisions. The EPA did so again on April 20, 2006 the EPA revised the National

Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: General Provisions saying it would reconsider certain aspects that were approved three years earlier.

If this rule is left unchanged, the current rate at which Superior Tube and Accellent are emitting TCE will fall into the category of what HHS describes as the "long period" for exposure which comes with extreme health hazards. The EPA must take immediate action to correct the misguided exemption given to these narrow-tube companies. It is my hope that you will vigorously work to find a solution to this issue so that we may work together in the preservation of the health of our community.

Sincerely,

Joe Sestak
Member of Congress

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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